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SUPPLEMENT TO A PAPER,

ENTITLED

AN ANALYSIS OF 162 CASES

OF

OVARIOTOMY,

WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN GREAT BRITAIN,

PUBLISHED

IN VOLUME XXXIV OF THE 'MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL TRANSACTIONS.'

BY

ROBERT LEE, M.D., F.R.S.,

PHYSICIAN TO ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

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In a postscript to this paper it is stated, that in 60 cases the ovarian disease could not be removed; 19 of these proved fatal. Of the remaining 102 cases in which the operation was completed, 42 terminated fatally. The present condition of the 60 patients who recovered is very imperfectly known. The last case contained in this table occurred on the 7th May, 1851, and terminated fatally.

In the course of the last eleven years, the operation of ovariotomy has been performed frequently in Great Britain, and the opinion has come to prevail, that the diagnosis of ovarian diseases is more easy and certain than the results of this analysis indicated, and that the operation of ovariotomy is attended with much less danger than I have represented. The interests of humanity require that as far as possible a complete view should be given of the results of all the cases which have occurred in this country, fortunate and unfortunate, during the last eleven years.

But as all the cases of recovery have been published, and many of those which have terminated fatally with which I have become acquainted, have remained unpublished, it must be obvious that no pratical conclusions can be drawn from what are called the statistics of ovariotomy, and which are only calculated to mislead. In some of these unpublished cases, after an incision had been made of great length through the abdominal parietes, the ovarian mass was found so firmly adherent that it could not be removed. In other cases, where the ovarian cysts and tumours were readily removed, and where recovery was anticipated, death took place in no long period from hæmorrhage, peritonitis, the injury inflicted upon the intestines, or the shock of the operation.

In the course of the last eleven years, a very large number of cases of ovarian disease have come under my observation in private practice and in the Burton Ward in St. George's Hospital, of which accurate written reports have been preserved. In none of these have I dared to recommend the patients to have the operation of ovariotomy performed; and from the slow progress which many of these cases have made, enduring for years, and the comparatively slight inconvenience which has been produced, the evidence to my mind is conclusive, that the course which I have recommended has contributed largely to the preservation of human life. In a great number of these, none but those practitioners who are blind to the dangers which surround the operation would have ventured to operate.

I have strong reason for believing that if the whole truth on this subject were made known, the results would differ widely from those which have recently been published.